

2 March 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Policy Staff, Office of Security
THROUGH : Assistant Director, OCR *JW*
SUBJECT : Comments on ICIS Letter dated 26 January 1956

1. A survey conducted in the latter part of 1955 reflects that the major producing components of the Agency felt that a continuing review of their classified material was not practical because of the interrelationship between classified source documents and completed intelligence reports. A review of such documents would not result in a downgrading action due to the responsibility to protect intelligence sources and methods, or the necessity to protect the intelligence analysis or estimate that reflects in addition to information the interest in a specific area or subject and the timeliness of such reporting.
2. The review, for the purpose of downgrading of classified material produced by this Agency, is one which probes more deeply into the content of the document itself, than would be the case with other agencies of the Government. The DCI is charged, in Public Law 110, with a responsibility for the protection of intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure. As a result the substantive content of some documents may warrant a low classification or may not constitute classified information, however, the documents in their entirety do reflect information which could reveal the source of the information or the method used in obtaining it. The collection of information on a particular subject and/or area resulting from a specific operation may cease, whereas the operation and the collection of other information continues. The source may remain the same, the method may remain constant. The downgrading or declassification, therefore, of a document on the basis of its substantive content, which was produced as a result of this collection effort, could reflect the source or method and as unclassified or downgraded material it could be revealed to unauthorized persons.
3. Throughout the activities of collection and correlation of information, which upon processing is developed into intelligence reporting, the citation of document sources is a necessity to permit proper evaluation and use of the information or intelligence. This cross-referencing or citation results in a reflection of source and method in various documents produced, as well as in their various stages of development. The downgrading of these documents then is dependent upon the downgrading of other documents which were used in the production.

4. In consonance with the protection of sources and methods it must be recognized that as a result of the exemption, set forth in PL 110, 81st Congress, 1st Session (1949), of the Agency from the provision of any law requiring the publication or disclosure of the organization, functions, names, official titles, salaries, or numbers of personnel employed by the Agency, there will be certain administrative information which cannot be downgraded or declassified.

5. The foregoing, however, does not prevent a continuing review of classified material falling into certain categories such as daily correspondence, administrative letters and memoranda, and a few specific types of periodic publications (namely those which do not reflect documentation by citing sources). A portion of this material can be declassified through the use of automatic downgrading stamps placed on the material at the time of origin, thus eliminating the need for further review. Another portion of this material can be downgraded through the use of automatic downgrading stamps. This latter group together with the remainder of the material on which the automatic downgrading action could not be effected, should be subject to a yearly review by the original classifying authority or his successor.

6. It is recommended that the Executive Order be changed so as to categorize the documents which should be considered for automatic downgrading action, as well as those which are subject to a yearly review. It is further recommended that the Executive Order be amended to provide for the exemption, from a continuing review for downgrading purposes, of certain types of defense information such as intelligence reports, material reflecting intelligence plans and operations, and information reflecting this Agency's organization, functions, etc.

7. In regard to the two changes in the Executive Order as suggested in the reference letter, it is felt that suggestion no. 1 is practical only to the extent indicated in paragraph 5 above. Since the major product of the Agency falls within the category of intelligence reports, a requirement to review a fixed percentage of previously classified information is not feasible (see paragraphs 1, 2, 3, and 4).

8. With regard to suggestion no. 2, problems confronted by this Agency in a declassification of documents partially revealing sources and methods is such that no method, known at this time, encompassing a broader automatic downgrading or declassification action would be suitable for this Agency.

9. The problem of unnecessary or over-classification within the Agency has been negligible, occurring more often on documents of an administrative nature rather than substantive intelligence reports. These instances have not been based on classified versus unclassified information, but rather Confidential versus Secret. In the establishment of procedures governing the application of original classification to material, specific officers

have been designated in the various organizational units of the Agency to be responsible for the application of classification as well as a continuing review. Through these officers and the specifically designated persons authorized to classify, such improper classification should be avoided.

[REDACTED] X1A9A

CIA Classification Control Officer

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE ACTING DIRECTOR

The Interdepartmental Committee on Internal Security is considering revision of Section 4 of Executive Order 10501. Section 4 deals with downgrading and declassification of classified material.

The Committee requested CIA's comments, with particular reference to two specific proposals:

Proposal 1: A required annual review of all classified documents for declassification purposes.

Proposal 2: Incorporation of a broader method of automatic downgrading or declassification.

(47)

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FORM NO. 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101

(DATE)

The attached proposed reply gives background information on problems encountered in downgrading and declassifying material, with special emphasis on the protection of intelligence sources and methods. It recommends Proposal 1 exempt certain types of material which retain their sensitivity over a long period of time and recommends against Proposal 2.

Recommend signature.

for SIGN [REDACTED]
L. R. WHITE
Deputy Director
(Support)

STATINTL

MEMORANDUM FOR: MAR 22 1956

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